# XIO3

GCACE

*Garden City Atari Computer Enthusiasts*
*1003 Amphion St. Victoria, B.C. Canada V8S 4G2*

March/April 1995


## *March 23 Meeting!*

Desktop publishing will be demonstrated at the March 23rd general meeting. Come and see how Calamus SL works and how the newsletter is produced. The demonstration will also include all you wanted to know and were afraid to ask about scanning images.

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# ATARI®
# NEWS AND RUMOURS

***by Rowland Grant***

Atari was present at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas early in January. Atari's fairly large display area featured a huge multiple unit video screen at least 20 feet high. This screen displayed the rather hypnotic output of the Virtual Light Machine which is built into the Jaguar CD attachment. There were Jaguar consoles everywhere. All the current Jaguar favourites such as Doom, Alien vs Predator and Iron Soldier were on display. However many Jaguar consoles demonstrated games currently under development. There were a number of Jaguar CD units running too, but only a few (and incomplete) CD games were available. There were a number of game designers present, and they were willing to talk to anyone about their games. It has been reported that the Atari display had quite a friendly atmosphere compared to some of the others. All in all, the Atari exhibit seems to have been reasonably well done. Unfortunately, just like the CES last summer, there were no new Jaguar games ready for release.

More than twenty new games in various stages of completion were on display however. There were three martial arts games: Double Dragon V, Ultra Vortex and Fight for Life. Space adventure games were Varuna's Forces (on CD), Battle Sphere and Space War 2000. New driving games were Burn Out, Rage Rally and F1 Racing. Also there was AirCars, a 3D type shooting and driving game. Sports games were Troy Aikman Football (in production) and White Men Can't Jump. Other types of games such as Cannon Fodder, Theme Park and Syndicate are in production. Hover Hunter, Hover Strike, Flashback, Phear, Pinball Fantasies and Rayman are still under development. More CD games, Blue Lightning, Battlemorph and Dragon's Lair were also shown. According to comments the

*See "News and Rumours" Page 4*

## G.C.A.C.E. EXECUTIVE

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## CREDITS

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## MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are $25 per family per year. Membership includes a subscription to this newsletter, access to over 300 8-bit public domain disks and 155 ST disks and increased time and upload/download ratio on the club BBS, Pothole. It can be reached by modem at (604) 642-6795.

## MEETINGS

Meetings will be held in the Nellie McClung branch of the Library at 3950 Cedar Hill Road (corner of McKenzie) on the fourth Thursday of each month. All meetings are at 7 pm. There is no meeting in the month of December. Copying of club ST public domain disks is done at meetings. Bring a blank, formatted disk for each PD disk you want. For 8-bit copying, please phone the club 8-bit librarian.

## EDITORIAL

For once I will not be insulting John Picken, but only because he didn't do anything outrageous enough to require comment. If you think I just insult him here and he takes it all in, guess again. Come to any executive meeting and you will learn that what I do to him in this newsletter is in retaliation for the way he treats me at these meetings.

The editorial this issue will be a stock one which all club newsletter editors have on file: Please submit. This is YOUR club and it requires some effort on your part to keep it active. This could be as simple as making a suggestion as to what you would like to see demonstrated at the next general meeting or writing an article on your favourite piece of software. Wtih your help, we can keep this club operating.

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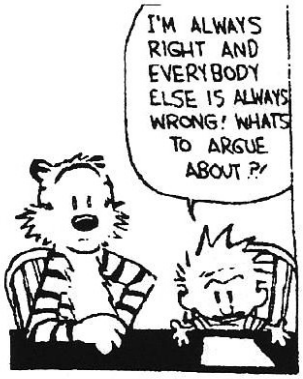
# PEEKing Around

by Gordon F. Hooper




... Welcome to new members RICHARD SKIPP and his son ANTHONY. Anthony's friend, CURTIS LEGGETT also attended the last meeting. Welcome back to renewing member JOHN O'NEILL, who just got modem software, so he will be open to insults on the Pothole ... Welcome also to new executive members NOEL BLACK (8-bit librarian) and CRAIG CARMICHAEL (director) ... DOMINIQUE THEVENIN, our corresponding member in Qualicum Beach, was in touch recently for some Public Domain software from our catalogue. All corresponding members should be receiving an updated catalogue shortly ... I sent a letter to Computer Direct, the company in Spruce Grove, Alberta I sent $5 to for their catalogue, asking what happened to it. I did see on the Internet that they were supposed to put out a new catalogue in the spring, so maybe they are waiting for that to be published. Of course, spring in Alberta is probably sometime in July ... BOB ETHERIDGE was up pillaging the magazine library so he could take the Antic and Analog issues he was missing and make copies of them. He makes copies and then puts each article in folders according to topic. So if you need info on 8-bit programming or anything else, Bob's your boy. His number is on page 2 under 8-bit help ... Thanks to ROWLAND GRANT for taking time out from painting and house upgrades to host the January executive meeting ... BUD MAINDONALD went up to Nanaimo and came back with a Mega4 STE, Atari SLM 804 laser printer, 105 meg hard drive, external floppy drive, scanner, 2400 bps modem and lots of software. You don't want to know how little he paid ... ARNOLD NAPP is off to Estonia for a couple of months. He told me has a daughter there ... MITCH RIVEST is looking for a fax modem, any baud rate, if you happen to have one for sale. Phone me for his phone number ... Also phone GORD at 475-0857 with news of the peccadilloes of fellow GCACE members. My supply of snoops was in short supply this issue, hence the short column ...

# The Big Boat Race

*Anonymous (Submitted by Douglas Skrecky)*

Once upon a time a Japanese Company and Atari decided to have a boat race on the river. Both teams practiced hard and long to reach their peak performance. On the big day of the race, the Japanese won by a mile. Afterwards Atari's team became very discouraged and morale sagged. Atari decided that the reason for this crushing defeat had to be found, so a *Management Team* was formed. They would investigate and recommend appropriate action. Their conclusion: the Japanese team had 8 people rowing and 1 person steering, while Atari's team had 1 person rowing and 8 people steering. So Atari hired an American Efficiency Consulting company and paid them incredible amounts of money. They advised that too many people are steering and not enough people are rowing. To prevent losing to the Japanese again the next year, the rowing team's management structure was totally reorganized to : 4 Steering Supervisors, 3 Area Steering Supervisors and 1 Assistant Superintendent Steering Manager. They also implemented a new performance system that would give the 1 person rowing the boat greater incentive to work harder. It was called the *Rowing Team First* program, with meetings and dinners and free pens for the rower. "We must give the rower Empowerment and Enrichment through this Quality First Program." The next year the Japanese won by 2 miles! Humiliated, Atari laid off the rower for poor performance, halted development of a new canoe, sold the paddles and cancelled all capital investment for new equipment. They then gave a *High Performance* award to the Steering Managers and distributed the money saved as bonuses to the Senior Executives.

first two of these games need work. In general, many of these new games received mixed reviews. Not that they were poor, but considering the power of the Jaguar, they could have been much better. And maybe the final releases will be. Many of these games were illustrated in a colourful brochure.

Perhaps the best Jaguar game at CES, and definitely something different, is Phear. This game is the creation of H2O Development, a tiny Canadian company. Phear has been described as a combination of Breakout and Tetris involving a rotatable sphere constructed of layers of variously shaped coloured blocks. The object is to remove certain blocks, while preventing the sphere from picking up new ones, to reveal the core of the sphere. Simple in concept, but very challenging. Hover Hunters is another interesting game, although it was shown in demo form only. Apparently the graphics were so impressive that its programmers received job offers from several companies including Novalogic and Nintendo. The game AirCars can be played by up to eight players using a Cat Box interface. The game play is reported to be promising but the graphics seem to be quite primitive. While it has been advertised in a recent Diehard Gamefan magazine, it is rumoured that AirCars has been withdrawn for modifications.

In order to cover the lack of new game releases for January, Atari sent out a series of news releases. Sam Tramiel is quoted as saying "We are working with over 200 developers to bring a wide variety of new games to the 64-bit Atari Jaguar in 1995. The powerful Jaguar technology can handle popular arcade games like Primal Rage or provide the speed and graphics necessary for brand new games like Batman Forever and Thea Realm Fighters." These are third party developments, and are not directly under Atari's control. The next news release covered sports titles such as Brett Hull Hockey (CD), Charles Barkley Shut-Up and Jam (basketball) and Jack Nicklaus Cyber Golf (CD). In addition Atari listed Hardball Baseball, CD League Bowling and Sensible Soccer. Some of the new games displayed at the winter CES were also mentioned in Atari's news releases. They promise that we will be seeing all of these games sometime this year. Perhaps we will. In a recent interview Sam Tramiel said that he expects about 50 Jaguar games by the middle of 1995. He went on say that if that happens it will be partly because Atari has changed its approach to developers. In the past, the company aimed to publish most of the titles for its games machines. But now Atari wants to turn independent developers into partners. To that end, Atari has assembled a technical team that travels around the world helping developers create Jaguar titles. Atari is also co-marketing the games.

Atari finally announced that its new double speed compact disk peripheral will be available before April (or May or ... ). The price will be $149.99, including a CD game. The CD player, which plugs into the top of the Jaguar will play both CD-based Jaguar video games and standard audio compact discs. Atari listed as its first CD game titles Battlemorph, Blue Lightning, Highlander, Demolition Man and Creature Shock. Not all of these titles were reported being seen at the winter CES. The pack-in game is rumoured to be Battlemorph. This is a Cybermorph type game but with more texture mapping. There are rumours that a much expanded Alien vs Predator game will be done for the CD. According to various sources, the release date for the Jaguar CD unit will depend on when enough CD games are available for it. There are rumours that Atari is waiting for about ten CD games before it launches the unit, and that several CD games have been ready and waiting for months. I understand that Atari took out a two page ad for the Jaguar CD in Electronic Games Magazine recently, so the release (sometime) of this peripheral seems definite. Examples of other peripherals such as the Jaguar Voice/Data Communicator and the virtual reality headset were not seen at the winter CES. Atari says that they may be ready before the end of the year. Until Atari sells a lot more Jaguars, these types of peripherals are likely to be money losing propositions.

What is the installed base of Jaguars? Only Atari knows, and not for sure either. Early in January someone in the Wall Street Journal gave the figure of 250 thousand. At the winter CES, someone from Atari is alleged to have said 125 thousand. An official publication at the CES stated that 150 thousand Jaguars had been sold. However, Atari in Europe explained that the 125 thousand figure was for the US only, and that 60 thousand had also been sold in Europe, for a total of 185 thousand. They went on to say that this total did not include sales in Canada and other countries outside the US and Europe. Now, Atari had a 1994 production target of 200 thousand Jaguars. Add to that the 1993 production and the figure in the Wall Street Journal is probably close to the total Jaguar production to date. The total number sold is probably somewhere between 185 and 200 thousand. Jaguar Christmas sales were fairly good. A lot of the smaller dealers sold out. Indeed Jaguars may be scarce. One of our local dealers hasn't sold a single Jaguar since Christmas. This is because he sold out, and the Canadian Jaguar distributor, Beamscope, hasn't sent him any more.

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Some other Jaguar dealers in B.C. have resorted to distributors in the US. It wouldn't surprise me if Atari has distributed most of its stock and is withholding further shipments prior to announcing some marketing changes.

There was some talk at the winter CES that the Jaguar would be sold in future without the pack-in game at a reduced price. When Electronic Boutique and other outlets began to sell Jaguars at $189 it was assumed that these were the new core packages. It turned out that these were the standard package with Cybermorph. Also all purchasers of the original Jaguar package between January 31st and May 3rd 1995 qualify for a free game (Tempest 2000 or Wolfenstein 3D) and an extra game controller. Coupons for this offer are available from Jaguar dealers. In other words the price of the Jaguars had been reduced considerably. This was confirmed when I saw a wholesale price of $134.87 for quantities of six or more. I would presume that the new core package would wholesale around $110 and retail around $150. There was a lot of speculation about the reason for the sudden price change. So much that Sam Tramiel posted a note of explanation. He wrote "... We at Atari will be making a public announcement in the very near future, end Feb early March, about the future pricing plans for Jaguar. Our plans revolve around the fact that we have cost reduced the system and want to make the Jag a mass market product. The announced price will make the Jag very affordable and will insure its success in the marketplace. ..." The new Jaguar core system will have no game or coupon. It is not yet available, but should be shipping in March. The retail price will be $149.95 according to one source and $159.95 from another. The coupon offer is a kind of compensation for paying a higher price for the older Jaguar package. It also serves to clear out the older inventory. Some games, Checkered Flag, Dragon, and Dino Dudes have been retailing in certain stores for $39 or less. I would assume that the wholesale prices of certain games have been lowered also.

A number of parallel developments seem to be part of the lower price strategy. One of these is the introduction of CD based games. The old $250 price for a Jaguar plus the $150 CD player gives a total of $400. This is the same price as the 3DO console. So it is necessary to lower the price of the basic Jaguar package quite considerably. The new price of the Jaguar plus CD unit would total $300. This will serve for the time being. But later this year Sony and Sega will introduce their advanced game consoles, and each uses a CD player. These may sell for less than the current 3DO consoles also. However, Panasonic has introduced a cheaper, smaller, stripped down 3DO console, and could reduce the price (although it hasn't done so). Atari has to keep the Jaguar CD's price below the competition. I doubt that Atari can afford to cut the price of the Jaguar much more, but it could reduce the cost of the CD unit by building it into the Jaguar. Apparently this is being done. Jaguar prototypes with CD drives built in have been seen. One has a squarish case, somewhat larger than the regular Jaguar with a huge red button at the back, probably not the final model. If Atari can shave $50 from the retail price with this economy, a Jaguar CD system could then cost about $250. By the way, all the prices I have been quoting are in US dollars. I suspect that when there are a substantial number of good CD games for the Jaguar most people would want the CD system so that they could play all the available games. The Jaguar without the CD might then be sold as the low end economy model competing with Nintendo's and Sega's older systems, or it might be dropped in favour of the integrated CD model. I understand that sometime this year Atari will release a Jaguar controller of a new design. It was developed in response to suggestions and criticisms from present Jaguar users. Finally, IBM is not the only manufacturer of Jaguar consoles. Comptronix in Colorado Springs, became a second manufacturer of Atari Jaguars in mid-1994. Perhaps Atari got a better deal from Comptronix.

After the hoopla of the winter CES there were no new games. There was some speculation that Atari had shot its bolt at Christmas, and that Atari was losing momentum to a point where it wouldn't survive against new competition. There were even rumours that Atari would abandon the Jaguar and become a games publisher only. There is no evidence of that at the moment. There was other bad news. Certain retail outlets have dropped the Jaguar. However it seems that some retailers agreed to sell Jaguars over the Christmas season only. The loss of these outlets might not signify anything. Finally, after a two month wait, the games known to be in production have begun to appear in stores. The first to appear is Cannon Fodder, a port over from computers including the ST. The game's graphics are far from full motion video, the players being rather small, but the game play is good and quite entertaining. A plus at least. A schedule of game titles has been released. This states that Syndicate, Theme Park, Troy Aikman Football, Double dragon V and Sensible Soccer will be shipped before the end of March. At the moment, some of these games have been seen in various stores. They are all port overs from other platforms. Syndicate and Theme

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Park are by Bullfrog in Britain. They have been good supporters of Atari in the past. However, Bullfrog has been bought out by Electronic Arts, a distributor that has not supported the Jaguar. It is rumour- ed that EA has some Jaguar development systems on hand however.

Bullfrog's managing director and all-round expert programmer, Peter Molyneux, revealed that a Jaguar CD version of the PC classic, Magic Carpet, is being planned. The conversion will be done by an outside developer however. The Jaguar version of Magic Carpet could support the Virtual Reality Helmet if the developers have access to the hardware. According to Atari, the next two titles by them will be Hover Strike (used to be known as Battlezone 2000) and Space War 2000. Tiny Toons Adventures was withdrawn for a complete rewrite. It might be out by September, about 20 months after it was announced. There are rumours that several Jaguar games by other publishers are in production. The Catbox interface for the Jaguar has finally been released by ICD at $69.95. The circuit boards were ready in January but the cases were delayed. The adapter for ST colour monitors is $14.95 extra. Atari will be attending the European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) on March 26th. This show will also be the place for the launch of the Jaguar CD accessory. A party will be held to celebrate the event, along with the display of the CD games available. Apparently a conference is planned to decide the pack-in CD game, and the launch party will feature some new cartridge games as well.

I have heard that when contacted in late December, Sam Tramiel confirmed that Falcon computers are still being made, although in limited batches, and that Atari has no plans to stop production. Nevertheless, there is a small industry involving the production of TOS based computers. C-Lab in Germany has licensed certain parts of Falcon technology. Their first product is essentially an upgraded Falcon labelled "Falcon II". The upgrade is an improvement to the sound handling circuitry and interfaces to make it even more convenient and usable by MIDI musicians. The new Falcon computer will retain the name and drop the Atari logo. No doubt it will be rather expensive. Then there is the Eagle, a kind of souped up TT by GE Soft. A prototype has been seen and it is rumoured that defective units have been shipped, apparently a production fault not a design flaw. It is estimated that there are 400 thousand Atari ST computers in use in Germany. Many of these are in small businesses using Calamus and related desk top publishing software. Because of the great expense in time and labour required to start again on a new platform, ST and TT upgrades are attractive. The Medusa, a 68040 computer from Switzerland is selling, even at its high price. Also there is some talk of a 68060 Medusa,

although it is difficult to find these advanced chips in any quantity. This market is attracting Apple. At a recent show for Macintosh computers, Apple displayed a number of Macs running Atari ST software running under MagiCMac. This is a multitasking operating system that runs TOS on a regular Macintosh. It is rumoured that Apple even approached a number of Atari software publishers in Germany to get them to make sure that their programs run under MagiCMac. Apple is discouraging the production of a MagicMac version that will run on a Power PC in native code however, after all they are trying to use MagiCMac to get the ST users to switch to the Apple products. MagiCMac is priced at 299 DM. Since the deutsch mark is now on par with the Canadian dollar, MagiCMac is not much of a bargain over here.

Rumours of the Atari Milan computer, using a fast CPU (68060 or power PC) and the Jaguar chip set, still abound in Europe. The latest rumour said that Atari would appear with its new computer at the CeBIT computer fair in Hannover Germany. The Fair management haven't heard of Atari attending. A new Atari computer at this time is just wishful thinking. The Barracuda enhancement for the Falcon computer should be available by now. Produced by Wizztronics, the Barracuda is a series of boards that fit into the Falcon. One board supplies a 68040 33MHz with floating point, two VME (96 pin) expansion slots and a 50 pin external video port. It will cost $950.00. There is a RAM card which costs $300.00 and a 486DX33 PC card costing $400.00. Additional cards will be available later. Steve Cohen of Wizztronics suggests that the Falcon

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be put into a new case such as his rack mount system. The Falcon will need a larger power supply with all the extra hardware. The PC card requires the Barracuda board and the memory expansion card to be present. The Barracuda board extends the video on the Falcon to 1280 by 1024 (2 colors), DMA access is speeded up also. Almost any Atari user can install these units with little technical knowledge. Steve Cohen says most of it is plug and play, 2 wires to solder, 5 if you take advantage of the video enhancement. Steve is also rumoured to be considering a TOS/Mac/PC computer using the 68060 chip. Finally, there are rumours of the DirecTT computer, an enhanced TT clone being produced on order by Computer Direct in Spruce grove Alberta. There is lots of life left in the Atari computer world.

A couple of new games have turned up. One is called Hollywood Hustler. This is an interactive video version of a poker game for the ST. It has been produced by a small company called Desert Star Software in England. Another is Pong 2000 for the Falcon by a Dutch company. These are commercial releases and are each quite elaborate games. Also the "Atari A to Z" book by Mark S. Baines is an encyclopedia of modern computer terminology specifically pertaining to Atari ST computers. It is a high quality book of 340 pages comb bound. It claims to contain a great deal of information not found elsewhere. Mark has been a regular contributor to ST Applications and ST Review. The book is published by Linnhe Computing in Scotland and costs 10.99 pounds plus postage. Team Computer in Germany has released a video of its NEON 3D software. This is quite elaborate software for doing raytrace 3D images and animations. Apparently the video is most impressive, showing a Falcon with co-processor doing the work of a state-of-the-art video work station. It seems that the Toronto Atari Federation will be hosting one of the largest Atari shows anywhere. ACE '95 will be held in Toronto on April 1st and 2nd at the North York Civic Centre. The lineup of exhibitors is very impressive. TAF is currently the largest Atari user group in North America. There are rumours that Vic Lennard, former editor of ST Review, is involved in starting a new magazine for the ST. Let's hope so. There are also rumours that Vic is now editor of a Macintosh magazine, and that the new Atari magazine will be left largely in the hands of others.

Atari is still going. It is maneuvering to hold the low cost end of the advanced game machine market. Up to now most of its sales have been in North America. The US sales of 125 thousand Jaguar units is not far off the number of 3DO units sold in the same market. Only Japanese sales have saved 3DO. In Britain, a big potential game market, the Jaguar outsold 3DO two-to-one. The lower price of the Jaguar is important in the British and European markets. Atari's Jaguar sales could parallel the European ST sales of former years, and for the same reason: Power Without the Price. A steady flow of new games is needed now for Atari to hold onto its advantage.

# GCACE Meetings

## by Rowland Grant

The January meeting was our Annual general meeting and election of officers. After reports, the first item of business was the approval of our annual financial statement. And surprise, we ran a deficit of $107.04. This is more than covered by surpluses that accumulated in previous years. In the discussion it was pointed out that the deficit is almost exactly the cost of our magazine subscriptions. Perhaps we should stop buying magazines for the library as there doesn't seem to be much interest in them. Treasurer John Towler explained each item, answered questions, and the financial statement was accepted as presented.

Most of the previous executive members agreed to stand for election, and were duly re-elected. However, George Rose stepped down as 8-bit librarian, and Noel Black replaced him. Craig Carmichael also volunteered to join the happy throng as a director. Gordon Hooper remains as President and also is serving as Editor. John Picken is Vice-President, so we can look forward to more of John's famous Vice-reports. Rowland Grant is Treasurer, John Towler has kindly stayed on as Treasurer and Ted Skrecky is keeping on as ST Librarian. George Rose and Bob Nex (Sysop) are the other directors.

*See "GCACE Meetings" on Page 9*

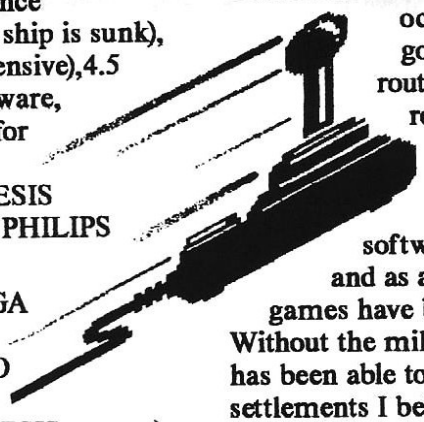
# Video Game Machine Review

## by Douglas Skrecky

My brother Ted received a copy from me of the 1995 Video Game Buyer's Guide. For those of you who have brothers who are too cheap to buy this for you here's a quick precis. Both the video game hardware and software was rated by 4 reviewers. Since there was usually a high degree of agreement in the ratings I quote only average ratings to keep things simple with a high 9 being yum, yum, 5 so-so and 2 being woof-woof. The best game released in 1994 for all systems was Donkey Kong Country on the Super NES, which was a hands down winner. Earth-worm Jim was the best for SEGA GENESIS, Road Rash for 3DO, The King of Fighters '94 for NEO-GEO, Burn Cycle for CD-I, Donkey Kong for GAME BOY, Bubble Bobble (what ever that is?) for GAME GEAR and Tempest 2000 for ATARI JAGUAR. In other separate ratings Mortal Kombat was voted bloodiest game and Mai Shiranui on the NEO-GEO was votest the hottest game babe. The graphics shown for ninja Mai showed a certain (ahem) evidence of artistic talent. The battle cry for this well endowed amazon was "Me Bouncy!". I kid you not. One of reviewers mentioned that he might enjoy being beat up by Mai.

The ratings for the other 6 games out for Jaguar at review time were as follows: 7.3 for Wolfenstein 3D, 6.5 for Dino Dudes, 6.0 for Raiden, 5.75 for Alien vs Predator, 5.0 for Cybermorph and 4.25 for Trevor McFur. Ted mentioned that Doom for the Jaguar is even better than on the PCs so it looks like Tempest 2000 is already no longer number #1 on the Jaguar. Now we come to the nitty gritty. Which is the best video game machine as judged by the quality of the games available for it? Make your guess, then compare with what the pro's say.

The ratings for portables were 5.5 for GAME BOY and 6.75 for GAME GEAR. The Lynx was not rated. The ratings for the non-portables were 2.0 for the NES (this 8-bit is outclassed by newer machines), 2.25 for the AMIGA CD (no more software since Commodore's corporate ship is sunk), 3.75 for Laseractive (expensive),4.5 for the Jaguar (little software, but great hardware), 5.0 for SEGA CD (games no better than for the GENESIS so why buy it?), 6.25 for PHILIPS CD- (expensive), 7.0 for NEO-GEO, 7.25 for SEGA GENESIS, 7.5 for 3DO, 7.75 for NEO-GEO CD, 7.75 for SEGA 32X (good buy for GENESIS owners) and finally the winner at 8.75 we have the SUPER NES.



In my opinion based on current prices the SUPER NES looks like quite a bargain. However this may change as more software is released for the newer, more advanced machines. The SONY PLAYSTATION and SEGA SATURN are not expected to share the software problems the Jaguar has suffered from so they will certainly be major players as soon as they hit the shelves. If one believes the hype these would appear to be more capable machines than the 3DO. If this does turn out to be the case then I expect that the 3DO will cease production by 1996. Whether the less expensive Jag can survive will depend on how soon a couple more excellent games like Doom are released.

Before signing off I would like to take a moment to throw humility to the winds and just plain gloat. In these very pages I once concluded that Atari's only chance to survive was to go the video game route with a machine which was upwards compatible from its ST line. The reason I stated that at least a fair degree of compatibility was necessary, was to eliminate the software bottleneck which would otherwise occur. Atari has indeed gone the video game route, but neglected to retain any compatibility with its previous products. Thus porting of ST software was never possible and as a result very few games have been produced thus far. Without the millions of dollars Atari has been able to extract in lawsuit settlements I believe Atari would now be bankrupted due to this lack of software. These funds have bought Atari some time to correct the software deficiencies of the Jaguar. Hopefully Atari will learn from its mistakes and retain a large degree of Jaguar compatibility with successor machines so as to avoid future software bottlenecks. I suspect Atari's next mistake in this regard would be its last.

Since the market is about to be flooded with advanced videogame machines, not all of these can long survive. I strongly suspect Atari would be well advised to seriously investigate the possibility of becoming a multiplatform videogame software producer, rather than remaining a small hardware company. There is a lot more room out there in the market for companies that can produce good software than good hardware.

# Atari 8-Bit Affairs

## by Rowland Grant

Fine Tooned Engineering's MIO II interface for IDE type hard drives hasn't been released. I understand that reaction to the fact that the board would only allow access to half the hard drive's capacity met with some disapproval. So Mike has gone back to the drawing board to create an interface that can handle 500 byte sectors. His Sweet 16 boards that replace the 6502C chips with 65816 processors are supposedly finished and shipping. However, I have not seen any comment on them so far. Fine Tooned may turn up at the ACE '95 show in Toronto. It would be neat for users to actually see the hardware demonstrated. So far all we have got is a series of news releases.

It's too bad that Atari Classics is held up. There is hardly anywhere to turn on this continent if one wants to know what is happening in the Atari 8-bit world. Jim Hood the editor and publisher of AC had major surgery (his throat I think) and will need help. According to a recent message, the next issue of Atari Classics should be out in March '95. Articles are being solicited for future issues.

Fast modems are becoming cheaper and users are trying to run them from their Atari 8-bits. This works fine up to about 9600 baud but throughput of data at higher baud rates is not up to expectations, particularly with MIO boards. Len Spencer has released HYPERSPEED which provides a software fix for the hardware deficiencies of the MIO board and the Black Box interface. HYPERSPEED allows these interfaces to make effective use of Bob Puff's new Y-modem-G protocol. Oh, by the way, our sysop contacted Computer Software Services and found that the name had changed. Bob Puff seems to have branched out to serve other computer platforms. He is still serving the Atari 8-bit market, and is quite responsive and helpful to his 8-bit customers.

BW-DOS has found its way over to North America. This is a new DOS that uses Sparta DOS command set. By relying on external utility files more than Sparta DOS does, BW-DOS is able to fit into less memory and is therefore compatible with TurboBASIC. While some have

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*"GCACE Meetings"*
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Steve Lemmen brought along a couple of boxes of old Atari related magazines for the members. I wasn't part of the initial scrum but afterwards I did find several copies of Compute! that I didn't have in my collection. Ted Skrecky brought along his Jaguar system and demonstrated the game Iron Soldier. Also Larry New turned up. Larry was president of the Club some years back. He's grown a beard, so I didn't recognize him at first. Larry has joined the PC users but he still has his 130XE. We spent some time after the meeting trying to convince Larry to return to the fun computers.

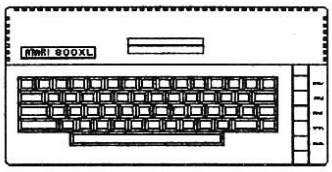
Gordon Hooper has been sorting the Club's periodical library that has been sitting in his basement for some months. We have decided to get rid of duplicate magazines. Most of these are Compute!, Analog and Antic magazines. Those magazines that members don't want will be offered to Atari users elsewhere. Gordon will post lists of available Analog and Antic magazines on the Pothole and on the Net. The library collection of magazines are all in periodical cases, very attractively labelled. Gordon used Calamus and his ink jet printer to create these labels.

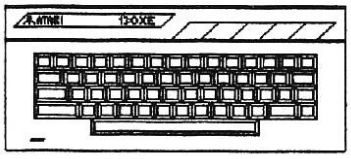
While we are removing duplicates from the 8-bit part of the library, we are adding back issues to the ST part. Most of these ST magazines were donated by Doug and Ted Skrecky. The latest donations include 7 copies of ST Informer for 1993, 2 of Atari Explorer 1992/1993, 13 copies of Atari ST User 1988 to 1994, two copies of ST Review 1992/1994 and one of ST Format 1994. I have added a copy of ST Log.

The February meeting was devoted to Swap and Shop. This time Steve Lemmen arrived with cartons full of software. Others brought mostly software too, there was only a little hardware to be seen. Gordon Hooper brought cartons full of duplicate magazines from the library. The ST library was operating of course, and Ted had a number of new disks ready. The library is over the 160 mark and growing. Also Craig Carmichael brought his Falcon to show the new developments in his OMEn operating system. There are a lot more fonts ready now. Omen was also running images in true colour. Craig says that he will be going to Toronto to exhibit OMEn at the ACE '95 Atari Computer Exhibition being hosted by TAF

## *GARDEN CITY A.C.E.*
## *ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT*
## *for year ending December 31, 1994*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ASSETS | | |
| cash on hand | 5.00 | |
| Bank of Montreal | 635.71 | |
| Prepaid expenses | 176.55 | |
| Total | | 817.26 |
| | | |
| LIABILITIES | | |
| Total | | 00.00 |
| | | |
| INCOME | | |
| Membership dues | 905.00 | |
| Coffee fund | 11.75 | |
| Donations | 10.00 | |
| Bank Interest | 1.49 | |
| PD disk sales | 60.00 | |
| Total | | 988.24 |
| | | |
| EXPENDITURES | | |
| Magazine subscriptions | 108.25 | |
| Newsletter & printing | 279.53 | |
| Postage | 277.61 | |
| Disks | 87.18 | |
| Room rental | 176.55 | |
| Society Act fees | 15.00 | |
| Office supplies | 35.61 | |
| Bank charges | 10.50 | |
| Currency exchange | 88.16 | |
| Coffee expenses | 16.89 | |
| Total | | 1095.28 |
| | | |
| DEFICIT | | 107.04 |





*8-Bit Affairs*

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claimed that BW-DOS is shareware, the documents seem to say that it may be freely copied. It has just been posted on the Pothole BBS, but I haven't had a chance to try it out. Perhaps we can get someone to do a review. Also there is now Sparta DOS 3.3, a rework of version 3.2c. It allows for 9 drives and the Sparta DOS X command set. The open file bug has been fixed.

High resolution video is not available for the Atari 8-bit computers. However a user group in Germany has created an interface card and software that enables Atari 8-bit computers to use a Hercules card for PC monochrome monitors. The schematics and handler software costs 10DM. I presume that the interface plugs into the parallel bus of the XL. This should allow graphics in monochrome up to 720 pixels across and 400(?) down on PC monitors. The Hercules cards have their own screen RAM (64K) and also provide 80 column text. The old Hercules cards (or their clones) should be cheap nowadays since most PC computers use VGA bit-mapped graphics. At present the software just replaces the E: device to provide 40/80 column text. But it should be possible to write software drivers that use the high resolution properties of the card. There are rumours that high resolution drivers are being developed. CAD/CAM programs of any consequence are difficult to program for the Atari 8-bit. One must use Graphics 8 for high resolution graphics and the limitations of the Antic chip makes large image movement difficult. I am aware of this because a member of my family used e-CAD on a PC for architectural work (using a Hercules board). He then set out to program similar software on our much modified Atari 400. He ran into all sorts of problems. However, if one can get out of the graphics 8 limitations, there is no reason why a useful small scale CAD/CAM program could not be developed.

The 8-bit library has received TWAUG Newsletter #13 with disk and Ol' Hackers Newsletter for January-February 1995. These disks have been posted on the BBS. Ed Hall, our correspondent in Yellow Knife, sent a couple of disks of interesting stuff. On one disk is Nu-Fiction from the New Aladdin. This disk has three pieces of interactive fiction: The Count, Corporate Carol and Wizard's Way. The Count is a great vampire story and lots of fun. The other disk is an Anthology of Humour from the New Aladdin, it is also somewhat interactive. These disks will go into the library.